

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 004379

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [EG](#) [IS](#) [MDA](#)

SUBJECT: MDA: EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER TELLS SWISS ENVOY EGYPT "WILL NOT OPPOSE PROGRESS" ON SWISS EFFORTS TO CONVENE CONFERENCE

REF: A. CAIRO 4262 (NOTAL)

- [B. AMMAN 4474 \(NOTAL\)](#)
- [C. CAIRO 3842](#)
- [D. CAIRO 3752](#)
- [E. CAIRO 3178 \(NOTAL\)](#)
- [F. CAIRO 2875 \(NOTAL\)](#)
- [G. CAIRO 2515 \(NOTAL\)](#)
- [H. CAIRO 2481](#)
- [I. CAIRO 1798 \(NOTAL\)](#)

Classified by Acting DCM Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) According to the Swiss Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission, Heinz Walker, Ambassador Didier Pfirter received encouraging signals on the Third Protocol/Magen David Adom (MDA) issue during his June 7 meeting in Cairo with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit. The Egyptian minister reportedly stated that he had instructed his mission in Geneva not to lead opposition within the Organization of Islamic Conferences to Swiss efforts on the Third Protocol/MDA issue, as "that was not Egypt's position." Egypt's position, Aboul Gheit clarified, "was not to take the lead in promoting the issue, but neither to oppose progress."

[¶2.](#) (C) Pfirter told Aboul Gheit that his Palestinian counterpart, Nasser Kidwah, had taken a constructive position on the issue during his last meeting. The Palestinian reportedly said that the Palestinian Authority was not opposed to Swiss efforts and would base its position on MDA behavior within the occupied territories. Pfirter also reportedly told Aboul Gheit that the Israeli MDA President had told Pfirter during a recent meeting in Israel that the MDA would only use its current symbol "within Israel." Aboul Gheit made clear that such a declarative statement - received in writing from the MDA - would have a very positive impact on Egypt's position on this topic. (Note: Walker pointed out that while the Israeli's words were on the surface encouraging, the use of the words "within Israel," opened the complex and politically volatile question of just how to define that delineation. End note.)

[¶3.](#) (C) Walker said that Pfirter had no other official meetings during his short stay in Cairo. Asked if there had been any discussion between Pfirter and Aboul Gheit on linkages between the MDA issue and Swiss Envoy Ambassador Staehalin's separate report on the Fourth Geneva Convention (as reported ref B, and as mentioned in GOE press statement in paragraph 4 below), Walker denied that any discussion on this subject had taken place. Walker said that MFA Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs, Ambassador Ahmed Fathallah (who joined the meeting with the Minister along with Cabinet Staff Members Ahmed Ezzat, Hala Al Ghanem, and Amr Rushdy), told Pfirter before the meeting that if Israel failed to withdraw from Gaza as scheduled, it would be very difficult for progress to be made on the Third Protocol/MDA issue. Despite that cautionary note, Walker said that Pfirter departed Egypt very encouraged by the outcome of his meeting with Aboul Gheit and that the Swiss envoy intended to continue his consultations with Arab states. During their meeting, Aboul Gheit was overheard instructing his staff to arrange either a telephone conversation or meeting with Palestinian Foreign Minister Kidwah on the Third Protocol issue.

[¶4.](#) (U) Text of June 7 GOE Foreign Ministry press statement on Pfirter meeting (unofficial Embassy translation):

Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit met today with Swiss Special Envoy Ambassador Didier Pfirter who briefed the Minister on Switzerland's efforts to hold a diplomatic conference of the countries that are party to the Geneva Conventions to discuss the issue of recognizing an additional neutral emblem to be used by the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement around the world.

The Minister expressed hope that regional circumstances would be suitable for holding such a conference and stressed the necessity of providing protection for the human relief organizations to be able to best carry out their missions. The Minister also praised the role played by Switzerland as the State depositor of the Geneva Conventions in enhancing the commitment to the provisions of these conventions.

The Minister pointed to the UN General Assembly's resolution regarding the International Court of Justice advisory opinion on the separating wall and lauded the section of the resolution that assigns Switzerland to submit a report in this connection. The Swiss Envoy underscored the importance of the issue and noted that the report would be issued within the next few weeks.

End text of Egyptian MFA press statement.

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GRAY